

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

July 21, 2005

A study session of the City Planning Commission convened Thursday, July 21, 2005, at 12:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, 333 W. Ocean Boulevard, to discuss the West Gateway Redevelopment project. The regular meeting of the Planning Commission convened at 1:30.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS: Morton Stuhlbarg, Leslie Gentile, Matthew Jenkins, Mitchell Rouse, Nick Sramek, Charles Winn

CHAIRMAN: Morton Stuhlbarg

EXCUSED: Charles Greenberg

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Suzanne Frick, Director of Planning and Building
Greg Carpenter, Planning Manager
Angela Reynolds, Advance Planning Officer
Lemuel Hawkins, Planner
Jeff Winklepleck, Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Kaiser, Redevelopment Agency
Lisa Malmsten, City Attorney's Office
Kathy Brown, Minutes Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Winn led the pledge of allegiance.

MINUTES

The minutes of June 16, 2005 were approved on a motion by Commissioner Winn, seconded by Commissioner Jenkins and passed 5-0-1. Commissioner Gentile abstained and Commissioner Greenberg was absent.

SWEARING OF WITNESSES

CONSENT CALENDAR

In response to a query from Commissioner Winn, Lemuel Hawkins stated that the La Bodega Market had some issues with Code Enforcement regarding bringing the market into compliance, but not issues related to the check cashing business.

Greg Carpenter stated that an e-mail was received regarding Item 1C and a request to add several additional conditions with regards to hours of operation, curbs being repainted and curb cuts being filled in.

Commissioner Sramek made a motion to approve items 1A, B, C, D, E, and F as presented by staff and Commissioner Jenkins seconded the motion which passed 6-0. Commissioner Greenberg was absent.

1A. Case No. 0505-11, Conditional Use Permit, CE 05-83

Applicant: Dolex Dollar Express, Inc.
c/o Manuel G. Silva
Subject Site: 305 W. Anaheim Street (Council District 1)
Description: Request for a Conditional Use Permit for the installation of a fifty-five (55) square foot check cashing/money transfer booth within an existing market (dba La Bodega Market #8).

Approved the Conditional Use Permit, subject to conditions of approval.

1B. Case No. 0505-09, Conditional Use Permit, CE 05-81

Applicant: Dolex Dollar Express, Inc.
c/o Manuel G. Silva
Subject Site: 1420 E. Anaheim Street (Council District 2)
Description: Request for a Conditional Use Permit for the installation of a fifty-six (56) square foot check cashing/money transfer booth within an existing market (dba La Bodega Market #4).

Approved the Conditional Use Permit, subject to conditions of approval.

1C. Case No. 0202-25 (Modification) Conditional Use Permit

Applicant: Dolex Dollar Express, Inc.
c/o Manuel G. Silva
Subject Site: 2900 E. Anaheim Street/1240 Gladys Avenue (Council District 4)
Description: Request for the Modification of an approved Conditional Use Permit for a check cashing/money transfer booth within an existing market (dba La Bodega Market #5) to a newly created commercial store front located at 1240 Gladys Avenue.

Approved the Conditional Use Permit, subject to conditions of approval.

1D. Case No. 0504-18, Vesting Tentative Parcel Map, CE 05-70

Applicant: Kent Bumgarner
c/o Robert Vargo
Subject Site: 3246 Wilton Street (Council District 4)
Description: Request for approval of Vesting Tentative Parcel Map No. 062454 to convert four (4) residential dwelling units in an existing apartment building into condominiums.

Approved Vesting Tentative Parcel Map No. 062454, subject to conditions.

1E. Case No. LDR-05

Applicant: City of Long Beach
Subject Site: Citywide
Description: The 2004-2005 Local Development Report and its conformance with the 2004 Congestion Management Program.

Recommended that the City Council adopt a Resolution self-certifying the Local Development Report and its conformance with the Congestion Management Program.

1F. Case No. GPC 7-21-05

Applicant: Jae VonKlug
Long Beach Redevelopment Agency
Subject Site: 1401 E. Anaheim Street (Council District 6)
Description: Finding of Conformity with the General Plan for an alley vacation and dedication.

Found the proposed vacation and dedication in conformance with the adopted goals and policies of the City's General Plan.

CONTINUED ITEMS

2. Downtown Parking Management Plan Update

Barbara Kaiser, of the Redevelopment Agency, stated that in 2000 a Parking Task Force was formed to look at parking needs in the Downtown area. A consulting firm recommended 10 strategies that have guided actions, relative to downtown parking, since 2001 including the development of additional parking, a parking marketing program, a parking monitoring program, a signage program, the incorporation of shared parking, the modification of meter times and fees and the reorganization and centralization of parking management. Ms. Kaiser then discussed each strategy in depth and discussed the actions that have been taken in the last 2 ½ years to implement these recommendations. She then summarized the Redevelopment Agency's financial investment in the program.

In response to a query from Commissioner Jenkins, Ms. Kaiser stated that she felt the city was keeping up with the parking needs created by the development of more residential and commercial projects.

John Morris, owner of Smooth's at 144 Pine Avenue, stated that while he supports the program he believes there are serious problems. He stated that on weekend evenings there is traffic gridlock at the intersection of Broadway and Pine, causing a 20 minute wait to get cars retrieved from valet parking. He also stated that signage at Landmark Square is hard to read due to sign placement. He also remarked that he didn't believe that all the parking would be replaced that was lost when new residential developments were built.

In response to a query from Commissioner Gentile, Mr. Morris stated that he would like to focus on parking at Landmark Square and the City Place, suggesting that better signage be provided at Landmark Square and that something be done to change the public's perceptions regarding the safety of walking from the City Place structure to Broadway and Pine.

The owner of Aladdin Grill on Pine stated that he had a 20 person party on a recent Friday night and they were an hour and a half late for their reservation due to the traffic and difficulty in finding parking. He also stated that in the last five months he had been receiving numerous complaints from customers regarding the parking/traffic situation. He suggested that the option of closing Pine/Broadway on the weekends be considered.

In response to Mr. Morris' comments, Ms. Kaiser stated that the Redevelopment Agency had been in negotiations with the former manager of Landmark Square to receive money under a grant from the MTA for better signage, but that manager had resigned and the new manager was not interested in increasing the amount of public parking in the building and was considering pulling out of the parking validation program completely.

Ms. Kaiser also stated that the traffic signals are currently set to give priority to East/West traffic flow, but the City Traffic Engineer could look into switching the timing of lights on weekend evenings to give priority to North/South traffic.

Ms. Kaiser also stated that she could provide a chart showing that more parking was being added than was being removed. In response to a query from Commissioner Jenkins, Ms. Kaiser stated that the Redevelopment Agency would continue to work with downtown stakeholders to discuss parking issues.

In response to a query from Commissioner Rouse, Ms. Kaiser stated that valet companies could contract with the Redevelopment Agency for access to more parking spaces.

Robert Procter, 100 Atlantic Avenue, asked if the DLBA had made any accommodations to provide monthly parking for residents.

In response, Ms. Kaiser stated that none of the programs developed with the DLBA addressed residential parking. Parking is required by code for each of the new residential projects.

Shirley Rhoads, 100 W. 5th Street, representing the Kress Lofts Homeowners Association, stated that she had observed that much of the traffic on the weekends is attributed to people cruising Pine Avenue, not patrons of the businesses. She suggested that Pine Avenue be closed to traffic on weekend evenings.

Commissioner Jenkins made a motion to receive and file the Downtown Parking Management Plan and Commissioner Rouse seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Commissioner Greenberg was absent.

3. Case No. 0506-10, Certificate of Appropriateness

Applicant:	David Hayden
Subject Site:	349 Carroll Park East (Council District 2)
Description:	Hearing to consider an appeal of the Cultural Heritage Commission's decision to Conditionally Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations to 349 Carroll Park East, a home within the Carroll Park Historic District.

A request was received from the applicant that the item be continued to the Planning Commission hearing of August 18, 2005.

Commissioner Sramek made a motion that the item be continued to August 18, 2005 and Commissioner Jenkins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Commissioner Greenberg was absent.

4. Case No. 0506-05, Local Coastal Development Permit, Site Plan Review, Standards Variance, Tentative Subdivision Map, ND 11-01.

Applicant: Jim Najah
Subject Site: 23 - 4th Place
Description: Request for approval of a Local Coastal Development Permit, Site Plan Review, Standards Variance and Tentative Tract Map to construct a new four-story, six-unit condominium project with interior setbacks of 5'6" (instead of not less than 14' 6").

Jeff Winklepleck presented the staff report recommending approval of the project. Mr. Winklepleck gave a brief history of the project stating that in May 2001 the Planning Commission approved a 10-unit condominium project that included the subject site and the site directly to the north. The project was appealed to the City Council and the approval was upheld. The project was then appealed to the California Coastal Commission. The Commission found that no substantial issue existed with respect to the conformity of the project with the Local Coastal Program or public access. Subsequent to the approval, the interested parties were unable to consolidate the property and the project approvals had expired as of June 2005.

In response to a query from Commissioner Sramek regarding bluff slippage, Mr. Winklepleck stated that the Parks, Recreation and Marine Bureau were actively performing bluff erosion control studies and that the applicant would be required to perform soils analysis and mitigation measures to ensure that the bluff is stable.

Ms. Reynolds stated that the applicant would also be required to build a retaining wall.

Jim Najah, applicant, stated that the current project is smaller than what had previously been planned and that he felt the project would be a great addition to the block.

In response to a query from Commissioner Winn with regards to bluff stability, Mr. Najah stated that according to their engineer, the 4th Place level was stable. He also stated that caissons would be used for construction at beach level.

Rosemary Chavez, 1100 E. Ocean, stated that the project would completely obscure her view of the beach. She also stated that

according to CEQA guidelines, she felt the project required an Environmental Impact Report to be prepared.

Robert Jackson, chairman of Homeowners Association for 1100 E. Ocean, stated that his association opposed the project for a long list of reasons including the fact that no plans by the current architect had been presented, no soils analysis had been presented, the negative parking impacts to their neighborhood, the run-off from the site eroding their property, and the destabilization of their building caused by construction of the project.

Bob Kaplan, 19 4th Place, stated that he opposed the setback variance, he felt that the tiering needed to be greater to alleviate the shadowing it would cause on the neighboring building and also felt that there would be a negative impact on the parking in the neighborhood.

Brent Blount, 1100 E. Ocean, stated that he opposed the project due to the negative impacts caused by it being built so close to the lot lines which would increase the vulnerability of their property's stability and increase noise levels, obstruct views of the beach from their common area, diminish morning sunlight to their building and negatively impact parking in the neighborhood.

Mr. Najah stated that the construction of the project would not cause destabilization of the neighboring property.

In response to a query from Commissioner Gentile, Mr. Najah stated that having the side setback to code would decrease the size of the project.

Commissioner Gentile remarked that the curb cut appeared to be smaller and located to the south of the required drive aisle compared to the original plans and that the curb cut appeared to be very close to what the minimum clearance would be to street parking.

Mr. Najah responded that the plans met code requirements and that no street parking was lost. It was necessary to move the curb cut in order to meet code requirements for parking.

Commissioner Gentile also remarked that the necessary terracing needed to reflect the slope of the bluff was not defined enough in the submitted elevations and made the building appear to be vertical on the beach side.

Mr. Najah responded that they would be willing to explore options with their structural engineer.

Commissioner Gentile expressed concerns over the lack of composition in the elevations and over the livability of units that were essentially buried into the hillside. She also commented that the project did not seem to follow the development pattern of the area.

Commissioner Gentile stated that she felt more work was needed on the project before it could be approved. She wanted to see more attention paid to other recent developments in the area that were sensitive to the bluff, the skyline and the neighbors.

Commissioner Rouse stated that he felt that the scale of the project was imposing, but felt that it was appropriate to grant the variance for the reduced setback. He also stated that he would like to see the concerns over terracing addressed.

Commissioner Sramek stated that he would like to see additional study done with regards to the affect on the stability of the neighboring building.

Commissioner Jenkins made a motion to continue the item for redesign to address issues regarding design and to provide additional soils analysis to justify the setback requirement and to ensure that it would not impact the adjacent property. Commissioner Gentile seconded the motion which passed 6-0. Commissioner Greenberg was absent.

5. Downtown EIR Scoping Sessions

Applicant: City of Long Beach
Subject Site: Downtown and Central Long Beach Redevelopment Plan Areas
Description: Downtown EIR Scoping Session

Angela Reynolds stated that the purpose of the scoping session was to discuss the Master Environmental Impact Report for eight conceptual project locations in the downtown area, within the downtown and central redevelopment areas, looking ahead at potential environmental impacts that could occur with the redevelopment of Downtown.

Greg LaJoie, RBF Consulting, outlined the steps and timeline of the review process. He also discussed each of the eight project sites located within three primary cluster areas at the intersection of Pacific and 4th Street, Broadway and Long Beach Boulevard, and Broadway and Lime. Mr. LaJoie stated that the projects would be mixed use residential/retail developments with parking.

In response to a query from Commissioner Winn, Jae VonKlug, Downtown Redevelopment Officer, stated that the Redevelopment Agency had strategic action plans for each of its project areas and downtown had been targeted for increased residential growth to respond to the housing demand. She further stated that if demand were to return for office space, there would be opportunities to provide additional space along the Long Beach Boulevard corridor.

In response to queries from Commissioner Sramek with regards to low-income housing and relocation assistance, Ms. VonKlug stated that the Redevelopment Agency reserves the right to subsidize up to 20% of the units in each of the planned residential projects for affordable housing. She also stated that California State Law mandates that assistance and monetary benefits be provided for relocation.

Don Darnauer, Central Project Area Committee and Downtown Long Beach Associates, had a question regarding a site at 3rd and Elm where the owners had entered into an owner participation agreement.

Ms. VonKlug responded that the owner of the building was part of a group that had submitted a proposal for a new development at that site. While the proposal had not been rejected, it was tabled so that other proposals could be received and reviewed.

In response to another query from Mr. Darnauer, Ms. VonKlug stated that the purpose of the scoping session was to look at potential impacts if development occurs. She further stated that projects were in a conceptual stage and that no one should take the meeting as notice that a project had been approved or that people needed to relocate.

Louise Kripal, 100 Atlantic Avenue, stated that her apartment building did not have enough parking spaces for each of the units, so tenants must park on the street. She asked that street parking for her building be considered when development occurs. She also asked that the effect of construction debris on the neighborhood be considered during development.

Ms. VonKlug stated that when possible, the Redevelopment Agency tries to incorporate additional parking into projects in areas where other properties suffer from parking shortages.

Marjorie D'Ambrosio, 100 Atlantic Avenue, stated that she thought the Volunteers of America building should be torn down and used for parking.

Todd Spence, 100 Atlantic Avenue, stated that it was hard to comment on how a project was going to affect him, if he didn't know what the project would look like.

Ms. Reynolds responded that the purpose of the Master Environmental Impact Report was to estimate what types of impacts might occur such as noise and debris during construction.

Carlos Mendes, 100 Atlantic, stated that with the growth of the arts community, there are events going on all the time that impact parking in the area. He commented that he would like to see a large subterranean parking structure be included in the Von's project. He also stated that he would like to see an architectural statement made, reflecting the flavor of the East Village.

MATTERS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Kristen Autry, Save Long Beach Skyline, P.O. Box 20378, stated that there was a piece of property at Ocean Boulevard and Alamitos, where the Video Choice store is located, that she was told was public property that had been purchased for road expansion. She asked if road expansion was being considered in light of the new projects planned downtown. Ms. Reynolds responded that the intersection was included in the Master EIR and would definitely be looked at.

MATTERS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

There were no matters from the Department.

MATTERS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

There were no matters from the Commission.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 4:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Eidson
Minutes Clerk